



Health and WaSH

Impact of the Demographics and Health scenario on disease burden

Jakkie Cilliers

Last updated 14 January 2025 using IFs 7.84

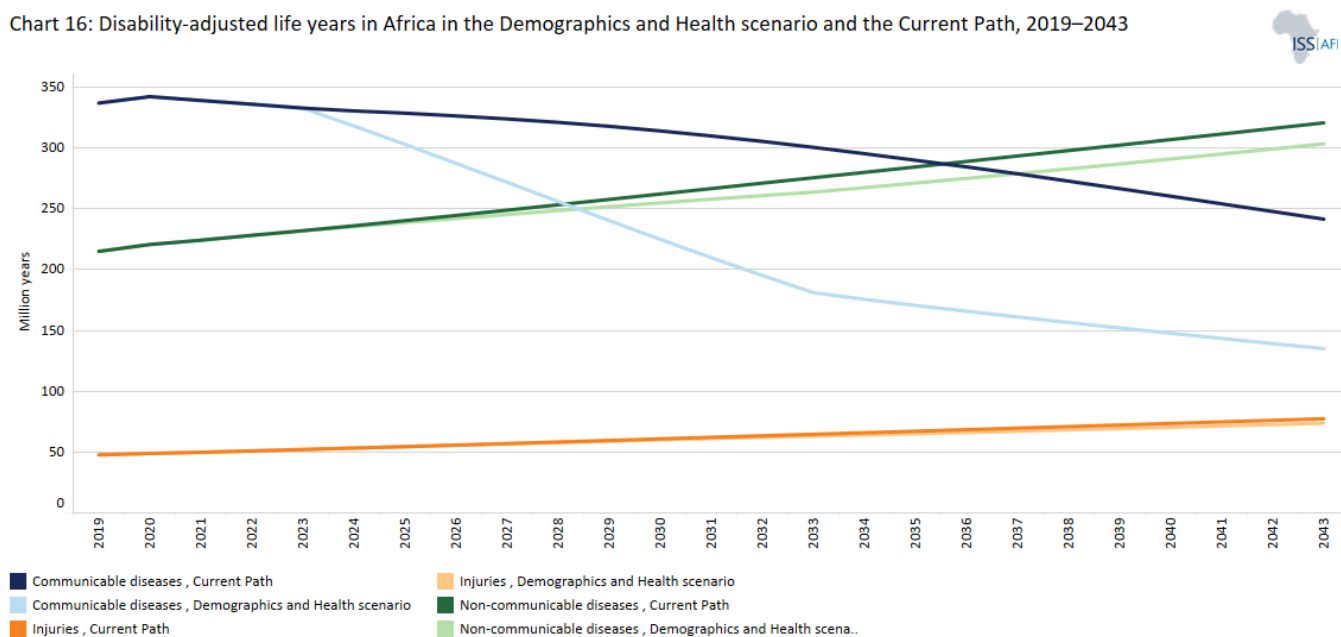
Impact of the Demographics and Health scenario on disease burden

Another way of measuring the impact of the Demographics and Health scenario is to use disability-adjusted life years (DALYs), a standard metric for capturing a country or region's disease burden. This metric offers a way of accounting for the difference between a current situation and an ideal situation, where everyone lives up to the life expectancy in Japan (the country with the longest life expectancy globally), free of disease and disability. Early death translates to years of life lost and sickness translates to years lost due to disability. One DALY therefore represents the loss of the equivalent of one year of full health.[1] For example, in 2019 Africa is estimated to have lost around:

- 337 million years of life as a result of its high communicable disease burden
- 215 million years as a result of non-communicable diseases, and
- 48 million years due to [injuries](#).

In the Demographics and Health scenario, Africa gains 112 million DALYs in 2043 from a lower communicable disease burden, almost 19 million DALYs from a lower non-communicable disease burden (Chart 16) and almost 4 million DALYs from fewer injuries. In addition to the intrinsic value of healthy human life, this also means millions more productive years and contributions to the continent's development.

Chart 16: Disability-adjusted life years in Africa in the Demographics and Health scenario and the Current Path, 2019–2043



Source: Ifs 7.84 initialising from IHME GBE data

Endnotes

1. CJ Murray and AD Lopez, Global Mortality, Disability, and the Contribution of Risk Factors: Global Burden of Disease Study, *Lancet*, 349:9063, 1997, 1436–42.

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About the authors

Dr Jakkie Cilliers is the ISS's founder and former executive director. He currently serves as chair of the ISS Board of Trustees, head of the African Futures and Innovation (AFI) programme at the Pretoria office of the Institute, and is an extraordinary professor at the University of Pretoria. His 2017 best-seller *Fate of the Nation* addresses South Africa's futures from political, economic and social perspectives. His three most recent books, *Africa First! Igniting a Growth Revolution* (March 2020), *The Future of Africa: Challenges and Opportunities* (April 2021), and *Africa Tomorrow: Pathways to Prosperity* (June 2022) take a rigorous look at the continent as a whole.

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